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I500 words

POOR DAVIE TAKES CHARGE

The week the bear pays Springvale a visit,everyone is scared.Seein' as prairie folks is got no more than a fairy tale acquaintance with bears,this is not surprisin'. Sloughgrass Jones and his miserable pair of hounds is hangin together,close,in mutual fear of bein' et up.About the only one that aint scared is Poor Davie Sloan.

Poor Davie is not just rightly balanced in the head and always comes in for a lot of teasin' and tormentin' around m store at Springvale.Sloughgrass,who is a coward from the boots up takes the lead.Life is unhappy for Poor Davie most of the time.I always think this is why he gets on so familar and easy with animals and likes them all,barrin' Sloughgrass' hounds.

The talk around the counter on Monday is all bear. Poor Davie,in his timid way,tries to tell them it's just followed the river,down from the bush country,to taste the extra fine saskatoons we have that summer.But nobody has any

faith in the bear's intentions but Davie.

The general opinion is that the bear's to be caught and killed.Nobody says out plain who should do the ketchin',but it's easy to see they think it's up to Sloughgrass and the hounds.

Sloughgrass don't seem to catch the hints that's bein' thrown at him.He is agreein' as loud as the next,that it's got to be caught and askin' along with them how it's to be done.

I see ~~that~~ Poor Davie,settin'on the staple barrel in th the corner where the harness is hung,is gettin' ready to say somethin'.I asks him what it is.He ups and says that if the folks'll promise not to kill the bear he'll ketch it and send it back where it come from.

This furnishes everyone with a big laugh.Sloughgrass asks him,sarcastic like,how he' goin' to ketch a bear when he's afraid of a pair of hounds.

At that remark,Poor Davie gets madder than I ever see him.It's because he aint scared.He aint a mite ascared of them hounds.He just plain don't like 'em.He straightens up on the staple barrel,and lookin' Sloughgrass right in the eye,says he's the one that's scared or he'd go out and git the bear with the hounds.

For answer to that,Sloughgrass hits him a swat that knocks him off the staple barrel and walks away.After that no one feels like pressin' the matter of ketchin' the bear.

Poor Davie sets on the staple barrel a longtime after the rest are gone.I see he's figurin' somethin' out so I just leaves him set.Of course I figure to git round to askin' him what he's thinkin' on but when I do he's slipped home on me.

All the rest of that week no one shows up at the store. By saturday I'm ready to believe the bear is playin' up to the bad opinions everyone has of him.I'm also itchy to know

what Poor Davie was figurin'.

Come noon,everyone is at the store but Sloughgrass and Poor Davie.Nobody is seen either of them all week.Seems folks hasn't been goin' around much.The bear is still down on the river bottom.Trouble is it don't stay there.Instead i it keeps a sallyin' up onto the flats,where the people lives, scarin' 'em silly.It's so bad they suspects he's hidin' behind every Russian thistle.

There's a stronger opinion than ever that Sloughgrass and the hounds aint doin' their duty.I see that public opinion is all set for pressin' 'em into action.

I've just took down a pail of B.C.syrup for Irey Smith, when in walks Sloughgrass and the hounds.But,right behind 'em and keepin' them in step is Poor Davie and the bear!

Nobody,includin' myself takes a second look at what they sees.Irey,and a half dozen others jumps for under the counter.Jim Thomas lands in the bread box and pulls the cover down tight.Old Mc Cafferty,who spends most of his time complainin' about his rheumatism,makes a leap which takes him from the front of the stove to the top of the chocolate bar case.

I'm on the highest shelf in the store along with the lamp chimneys and the gopher poison.I can see all that goes on from there,but of course I don't think of that at the time.

Poor Davie has posted the bear at the door and give him Irey Smith's pail of syrup.Sloughgrass has made the staple barrel and from there into the breechin' of the harness. Leastways his feet is in the breechin' but his head is pushin' the ceilin'.The hounds is flopped so close to the floor it's like they is painted there.

Poor Davie picks up some sliced bacon,I have on order for Jim Thomas,and gives it to the bear.He also throws it the best of the chocolate bars outta the case.There's quite

a scene when the bear insists on eatin' them wrappers and all while Davie insists on takin' 'em off.I'm expectin',any minute that both Davie and the bars'll get swallowed but the bear takes it patient as can be.

By now all the folks is gittin' cramped and tired of hangin' onto whatever they is hangin' to,and I'm recovered enough to roar to Poor Davie he can have the whole store if he'll just clear outta there with that bear.All Davie does is ask where is the pork and beans.

They's in a box under the counter,but with the bear in charge of a mind as weak as Poor Davie's I aint gittin' down to find 'em.I try to tell Davie where they is but he don't understand and starts crawlin' around back of the counter lookin' for 'em.

The bear,left on his own,moves in the direction of Sloughgrass.At this he starts to kickin' and climbin' somethin' awful.The bear appears mighty interested in one of Sloughgrass' feet until it comes in contact with his nose. Not likin' that,it takes a swipe at the foot and to hear Sloughgrass holler,he's half et up right now.

I yells at him to quit the kickin' but he only goes at it worse than ever.I see it's not long till the breechin's goin' to bust and dump Sloughgrass right on the top of the bear.

By now,the bear is gittin' resentful at the number of times he's gittin' hit smack on the nose by Sloughgrass' boots.Poor Davie is still searchin' for the pork and beans. I sees I'm the one that has to do somethin' and do it soon.

There's a pail of honey I can just reach.I think maybe if I can open it and throw it over it will take the bear's attention off Sloughgrass.

I git the pail,I git off the lid and I toss it,but I'm to late.The breechin' has busted,and Sloughgrass is goin' for a short ride on the bear's back.

However it don't turn out so bad,for after shakin' off Sloughgrass,the bear starts to lick up the honey and forgets all about bein' kicked on the nose.

This is no comfort to Sloughgrass who don't know he's drippin' with honey.He feels that bear a lickin' him all over, and he knows for sure he's bein' et up.He lays like a dead man while that bear licks him from his boots to his head and back again.

By the time the honey is all gone,Poor Davie has found th the pork and beans.He is takin' some over to the bear when, feelin' playful on a stomach full of goodies,it makes a jump at the hounds, givin' out a little "woof".

If them dogs could only run regular like they done then, they would be world's champions.The bear lights out after them and Poor Davie,when he sees what's up ,goes after the bear.

I'm not long in gittin' down and closin' and barrin' the door.It takes me a few minutes to convince folks that the bear's gone.It takes all of us a half hour to convince Sloughgrass that he aint et up.

We just get's done when Poor Davie is back hollerin' at the door.Sloughgrass has all he can take.He faints dead away.Everybody else grabs a holta me for fear I'm goin' to open the door.

I finally persuade 'em to let me go to the window to see what's up.Poor Davie's out there, sayin' he's got somethin' he wants to give Sloughgrass.He also says that the bear is on the road back to where he come from.After everyone has a look to see if this is true I opens the door a crack and lets him in.

He has somethin' in his hands alright.Sloughgrass is just comin' outta the faint.Davie goes over to him and hands him the collars of them hound doge.Then he explains, in his gentle way,that he's most awful sorry but the bear took such a notion to the hounds that he et them right outta

their collars.

At this news, Sloughgrass goes into another faint and they all pull out, leavin' me to revive him the best I can.